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ABSTRACT

Many Ohio educators are retiring at a young age and returning to positions in public schools following retirement. Some states restrict retirees' returning to public-school employment. Ohio is the most lenient state of eight states reviewed in allowing retirees to return to work in public schools. This report provides the results of a study of 25 percent of the school districts in Ohio selected randomly by quadrant regarding the hiring of retired administrators. Data for the study were gathered through a survey. A total of 60 percent of those responding to the survey indicated that their district rehired administrators due, in part, to a shortage of qualified administrators or the difficulty in finding qualified individuals to fill administrative positions. More than 400 retired administrators were working in administrative positions in Ohio public schools during the time of the study. Hiring retired administrators is helping reduce the shortage of qualified administrators in Ohio. School districts, however, should use caution with this practice. This practice may help eliminate the current shortage, but could lower the pool of future candidates for administrative positions. (Contains 2 tables and 19 references.) (Author/WFA)

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The Effects of Retired Administrators Returning to the Workforce

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Abstract

Many Ohio educators are retiring at a young age and are returning to positions in public schools following retirement. Several states restrict retirees returning to public school employment. Ohio is the most lenient state of those reviewed in allowing retirees to return to work in the public schools. This paper provides the results of a study of 25% of the school districts in Ohio selected randomly by quadrant regarding the hiring of retired administrators. The shortage of administrators is a major factor in this re-employment practice. Over 400 retired administrators are working as administrators in Ohio public schools. Hiring retired administrators is helping reduce the shortage of qualified administrators in Ohio. School districts should use caution with this practice. This practice may help eliminate the current shortage, but could lower the pool of future candidates for administrative positions.

Introduction

Educators in Ohio typically retire from school positions at a relatively young age. Many return to active service in education following their original retirement and begin what is termed a "second career." This return to the educational workforce has an effect on the job market and in some cases helps reduce shortages in particular areas of public education. In Ohio, for example, 1,673 retirees were re-employed in Ohio schools during 2000-2001 (State Teachers Retirement System of Ohio, 2001).

There is a shortage of qualified administrators throughout the United States. A review of the literature indicates that this shortage is prevalent throughout many areas of the country. A recent report in Education Week indicates that an education watchdog organization warns "the recruitment of qualified principals and superintendents in California is becoming increasingly difficult"(Sandham, 2001). A study conducted by Education Research Service (1998) for the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) indicates that half of the school districts surveyed report a shortage of qualified applicants to fill principal positions. The shortages appear among all types of

Districts and at all levels including elementary, middle and high school principalships as well as at the superintendent level. The New York Times reported that 163 New York schools began the 2000 school year with a substitute principal (Goodnough, 2000). A study conducted in Utah found half of the districts surveyed report principal shortages at all levels (Galvin and Sperry, 1996). In a recent study in a western state, superintendents were asked about the extent of the principal shortage. Ten percent of the superintendents indicated "little" or "no" shortage, while 39.8 percent reported a "moderate" shortage. Fifty percent reported a "somewhat extreme" or "extreme" shortage of principal candidates. On a scale of one to five the mean score was 3.44 indicating that 90 percent of the respondents indicated a shortage. These results appear to deserve attention (Whitaker, 2001). Eighty-six percent of Minnesota superintendents reported filling principal positions was "difficult" or "very difficult"(Sheldon and Munnich,1999).

Two state boards of education took action as a result of administrator shortages in their states. In March 1998 the Iowa State Board of Education adopted a policy statement on the school administrator shortage (Iowa

Department of Education, 1998). The board noted "the evidence of an administrator shortage is plentiful." The state board's policy endorses recruitment efforts; encourages higher education institutions to collaborate with a broad range of education stakeholders in order to rethink administrative roles and conduct an assessment of preparation programs; and recommends collaboration among administrator preparation programs. The legislature in North Carolina authorized the state board of education to conduct a study of administrator salaries and shortages (Whitaker).

There is no evidence that suggests any in-depth studies were conducted on administrator shortages specifically in Ohio. However, the result of the study, which is the subject of this paper, confirms that a shortage does exist in Ohio. Fifty-three percent of those responding to the survey indicate that their district rehired retired administrators due, in part at least, to a shortage of qualified administrators or the difficulty in finding qualified individuals to fill administrative positions.

Retirement is one of the factors in this nationwide shortage. In 2001 a study released by the New York State Council of School Superintendents (NYSCSS) projected that

57% of the superintendents in the state will retire in the next five years. The report further recommends that incentives be added to the retirement system to encourage retirees to return to the workforce (Snapshot, 2000). The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that over the next decade, 80,000 principals will retire (Gerald, 2000). A 1999 University of Minnesota study estimates that by 2010 approximately 75 percent of Minnesota principals will be lost through retirement or attrition while student enrollments are expected to grow (Shelton and Munnich, 1999). States need to re-examine their retirement systems to allow for greater flexibility in retirees returning to the workforce and to help relive the shortages that exist (Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000).

To further show the severity of the administrator shortage, some future data projections need consideration. The number of teachers in elementary and secondary schools increased from 2.59 million in 1986 to 3.3 million in 1999; an increase of 27 percent. The number of teachers is expected to increase to 3.65 million by the year 2011 that is an increase of 10 percent over the projected period (Gerald). The increased number of teachers will increase the need for additional administrators thus making the shortage problem even more severe. In the same study of

projections, 288,567 masters degrees were awarded in 1985-86. In 1997-98, 430,164 masters degrees were earned, with an increase of 49 percent. The increase projected for 2010-2011 is 477,000 masters degrees. Administrators need masters degrees. The number of degrees earned will not keep up with the need for additional administrators. The shortage of qualified administrators may only be in its initial stages.

Review of Various Retirement Systems

Most states have some form of retirement system for its public school employees including teachers and administrators. These retirement systems require employees, as well as employers, to make contributions during the course of employment. Upon reaching a certain age or number of years of service the employee retires and draws an income for the rest of his/her life from the retirement system in accordance with the provisions of that retirement program. Benefits and rules vary by state with no two states having identical requirements.

Most of these state systems place limitations on employees who wish to return to work in a public employment position following retirement from their original state positions. Most systems place rather strict limitations on the amount of money a person may earn upon their return to

service. Some forbid any return to public employment. Normally there are no restrictions on those persons who pursue private employment following retirement.

For purposes of comparison with the Ohio Teachers Retirement System, seven states including several midwestern states are selected for review of their rules and regulations regarding employment following retirement. The Midwestern states are chosen because of their geographical location and their similarity to Ohio. None of these systems place any restrictions on private employment following retirement.

School employees in Michigan who retire from public service may return to work in schools. There is, however, an earnings limitation. Retirees may earn up to one-third of their final average salary or the maximum earning permitted by the Federal Social Security Act (Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System, 1998)). School employees who retire in Indiana may return to work in a "covered" (public) position, after 90 days of retirement, with a $25,000 annual salary limitation. However, this $25,000 limit does not apply to a retired member who goes to work for the Indiana Department of Education (Indiana State Teachers' Retirement Fund, 2001). Kentucky retirees may return to regular employment after retirement but will

not receive annuity payments. However, a Kentucky retiree may substitute for 100 days annually and receive compensation based on a standard salary schedule adopted by a district for all substitute teachers (Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System, 2000). In Pennsylvania a school retiree may return to service for no more than 95 days if an emergency exists. In this case the school employer must determine that an emergency crisis exists which creates a workload such that there is a serious impairment of service to the public. The school employer is also permitted to hire a retiree if no other certified teachers are available. The employer must make a "good faith" effort to secure non-retired personnel first (Pennsylvania School Employees Retirement System, 2000). Illinois allows retirees to return to work following retirement for 120 days or 600 hours annually in public employment. The Illinois state legislature is currently considering SB 1844 which would relax this rule due to the current personnel shortage situation (Illinois Teachers' Retirement System, 2002).

Minnesota places a limit on retirees returning to public employment. In 2001 a retiree under the age of 65 could return to work, but with an annual salary limitation of $10,680. There are no limits for those above 65 years

of age. A person employed as an interim superintendent may apply to exceed this limitation for the duration of the temporary position (Teachers Retirement Association of Minnesota, 2000). Missouri places a limit on retirees of 550 hours annually if they return to public employment following retirement. There are no exceptions to this rule in the state system (Public School Retirement System of Missouri, 2002). Oklahoma allows retired school employees to earn $25,000 annually only after they have been retired from public education for 36 months. This law became effective in July, 1999. Prior to that a retiree was allowed to earn a maximum of $15,000 or one-half of the salary used to compute the retirement benefits. The limitation was the lesser of the amounts (Teachers Retirement System of Oklahoma, 1999).

In reviewing the policies of several state retirement systems, none report having no limitations on retirees returning to work in the state's public education system. Most place limits of $25,000 or less on retirement earnings. A few states have changed their policies to help with shortages of administrators allowing retirees more freedom to return to public service work following retirement.

The Ohio Retirement System

Prior to 2000-2001 Ohio's certified public school employees could return to work in public employment on a limited basis of 85 days per school year after only two month of retirement from Ohio's Teachers Retirement System (STRS. 2001). There were no salary limitations. They could return to full time employment without restrictions following 18 months of retirement. In 2000-2001 the state legislature passed a bill eliminating the 18-month waiting period. Employees can now return to work two months following retirement without restriction. Thus a certified public school employee could retire at the end of one school year and return to work at the beginning of the next school year in the same position while being paid his/her retirement as well as the salary paid by the school district in which he/she is serving as an administrator. This procedure is called "double dipping" and is being accepted in the education world. This practice appears to be fairly common in Ohio as is evidenced by the results of a recent study of Ohio school districts conducted by me. With absolutely no limitations on retires returning to public service, Ohio is the most lenient system of

retirement systems reviewed regarding employees returning to public service following retirement.

The Ohio Study

A study I conducted in Ohio in Spring, 2002 reports the frequency with which retirees are returning to public service following retirement as well as the reasons school districts are hiring these retirees. A major goal of this study is to determine if the shortage of administrators is a major reason for hiring retired administrators.

The state of Ohio is divided into quadrants for the purpose of this study. Each quadrant is treated as a population with a 25% random sample obtained in each quadrant. The Northwest (Q1) and Southwest (Q2) quadrants each contain 38 school districts. The Eastern side of the state contains two different types of samples. The densely populated quadrant (Q3) including the city of Cleveland contains 54 districts in the sample. The sparsely populated Southeast quadrant (Q4) has a sample of 23 districts.

The superintendent of each sample district received a survey asking if the district hired any retired administrators in an administrative position. Superintendents were asked to specifically the position or positions in which administrative retirees were hired. The

final part of the survey requests superintendents to indicate the reason for hiring retirees.

The survey response rate is 71% statewide. One hundred eight superintendents responded out of a total of the samples of 153 districts. By quadrant the response rate varied from a high of 82% in the Northwest quadrant (Q1) to a low of 58% in the Southwest quadrant (Q2). The response rate in the Northeast quadrant (Q3) is 72%, while the Southeast quadrant (Q4) has a rate of 65%. There does not appear to be any significance regarding the difference in the response rate by quadrant.

Sixty percent of the respondents, 63 of the 106 responding districts reported their districts hired retirees in administrative positions. By quadrant the percentage does not vary significantly. Three quadrants reported a rate of hiring retirees between 55% and 59% while the Southeast quadrant (Q4) reported a 73% hiring rate. The number of respondents is lower in the Southeast quadrant (Q4) than in the others. This may have some effect on this data.

Table I - Number of Positions by Retirees by Type

Position	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	By Population
Superintendent	3	3	5	2	13	52
Central Office	3	4	11	5	23	92
Principal	10	10	16	5	41	164
Assist. Prin.	4	2	6	1	13	52
AD	1	1	0	0	2	8
Guidance	0	2	1	1	4	16
Treasurer	1	1	1	1	4	16
Other	1	1	1	0	3	12
Total	23	24	41	15	103	412

Table I reports the retirees hired by position by quadrant. The Northeast quadrant (Q3) has the largest number of retirees employed in its public schools. The Northeast (Q3) quadrant had a sample size of 38 districts, while along with the Southwest quadrant (Q2), contains the largest sample. However, there is not much significance in the variance among quadrants. Principals are the individuals most frequently hired in each quadrant and throughout the state. Superintendents and other central office administrators rank second in retirees working as administrators. There are a significant number of retirees

working as assistant principals in the state. The other positions are less common as evidenced by the study.

Table 2 - Reasons For Hiring Retirees

Reason	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total	Percent
Savings Salary	6	2	8	2	18	13%
Savings Benefits	5	1	10	2	18	13%
Shortage	24	13	31	13	81	60%
Popularity	5	0	5	2	12	9%
Experience/Qual.	1	3	2	1	7	5%

Table 2 adds some valuable data to the figures in Table I. In fact the data on the reasons for hiring retirees has as much significance as the number of employed retirees. Superintendents normally are concerned about finances and particularly saving money for their districts. However, in this case, the results of this survey indicate that an administrative shortage is an even more important reason for employing retirees than saving money for the district. Sixty percent of retirees employed as administrators in Ohio schools are employed because of a shortage of administrators. As an example of how savings is not really of much significance, in the Northwest quadrant (Q1) where 41 retirees are employed in the sample districts, the results provide only a total saving of $156,000 for these

districts. This is insignificant when one considers the total budgets of these districts.

Several respondents to the survey used the word "qualified" when reporting the shortage factor. There may not be a shortage of actual people to fill administrative positions, however, according to these respondents there is a shortage of qualified administrators. Superintendents report such factors as experience, skills, and quality when reporting the meaning of qualified. Some respondents report they hire retirees because they are interested in hiring the best possible individuals as administrators.

Conclusions

Several conclusions can be derived from the results of this study and from a review of various states retirement systems.

Ohio retirees have more freedom in returning to public service following retirement than retirees in the other states reviewed. Ohio retirees can return to work after two months following retirement with no restrictions. Most states place some type of restrictions on retirees who return to public service following retirement.

The literature reveals that there is an administrative shortage in the public schools throughout the United States. The results of this survey provide clear evidence

that a shortage of administrators exists in Ohio. A majority of Ohio school districts surveyed employ retirees in administrative positions. Sixty percent of respondents in this survey reported hiring retirees in administrative positions. When the results are applied to the total population of school districts in Ohio, there are approximately 412 retirees working as administrators in Ohio public schools. Based on the results of this research, the major reason boards of education in Ohio school districts hired retirees in administrative positions in their districts was due to a shortage of qualified administrators.

There is very little variance across the state of Ohio regarding the hiring of retirees as administrators. The survey results indicate that all quadrants are fairly equal with regard to the shortage of administrators, the hiring of retirees, and the reason for hiring retirees.

More retirees are employed in principal's positions in Ohio school than in any other administrative position. Superintendents and central office administrators rank second with regard to employment in public service following retirement.

The state legislature in Ohio is responsible for helping relive the administrator shortage in Ohio public

schools by changing the retirement system's policy regarding employment in public service following retirement. This factor has benefited schools greatly.

Retirees bring a wealth of experience and skills to Ohio public school administrative positions. They play an active role in improving the quality of Ohio's public schools.

Implications For The Future

The benefits of the practice of hiring retirees in public schools have certainly paid dividends for Ohio schools. If the practice continues the administrative shortage may gradually decrease. However, there are some problems that may arise that need consideration for future implications.

One of the major drawbacks of this practice could occur in the preparation of future administrators. As positions are filled with retirees the shortage diminishes and fewer positions are vacant. Aspiring young educators who complete their licensure program will be seeking administrative positions and may find it difficult to secure positions. As a result, the pool of young aspiring administrators may diminish. As re-employed retirees end their second careers there may not be young educators waiting to fill these position. This may create a more

severe shortage than currently exists. A problem could exist if the next generation of retirees decides not to seek a second career in public service.

Eventually the cycle will be complete and as the pool of retirees diminishes and the pool of young candidates diminishes a more severe shortage may exist than currently exists. The current solution may be short-lived.

The shortage problem may diminish in Ohio as districts are forced to build larger schools in order to get state building dollars. Larger school buildings would result in some reduction in the need for fewer administrators.

Other states may follow Ohio's lead and relax their policies on retirees returning to public service. This may help the administrative shortage that currently exists nationwide.

Regardless of the benefits to our schools today, care must be taken to plan for the future. Eliminating the current administrative shortage at the cost of a possible more severe shortage in the future is not worth the damage to the education of future generations.

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